

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

Chairman Dave Obey
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Service, Education, and
Related Agencies
Room 2358 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Todd Tiahrt
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Service, Education, and
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

As Members of the House National Service Caucus, we appreciate your past support of national service programs, and urge you to increase funding for the programs that are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) by \$260 million above the fiscal year (FY) 2009 level. This \$1.13 billion is the level proposed by President Obama in his FY 2010 Budget blueprint, "A New Era of Responsibility."

America is facing unprecedented challenges – health care costs are high, we need to develop clean energy sources, and schools are in need of improvement. With our public needs intensifying as the economy is in a downturn, there is no better time to support and energize community service and volunteerism to help our country get through this economic crisis, restore confidence and prepare our nation for the future.

Since the creation of AmeriCorps 15 years ago, our national service programs have built and renovated homes for low-income people, expanded Americans' access to public health, helped underserved schools, built and cleared miles of trails, and responded to natural disasters. Each year, the AmeriCorps network of local, state, and national programs provides opportunities for approximately 75,000 Americans to serve with non-profit organizations to address local needs. Learn and Serve America supports and encourages service-learning by providing grants and technical assistance to K-12 schools, community groups, and higher education institutions to facilitate service-learning projects; it enables over 1.5 million students to make meaningful contributions to their communities. The Senior Corps programs link another 500,000 Americans over 55 years of age to service opportunities. The National Civilian Community Corps' (NCCC) offers disaster relief and emergency response capabilities at strategic locations across the country, whose members also provide infrastructure improvement, environmental and energy conservation, and urban and rural development. Following the devastation in the Gulf Coast, more than 92,000 national service volunteers contributed over 3.5 million hours of work to the recovery effort. Across the country today, demand for opportunities to serve through these and other programs has never been higher.

Congress recently answered President Obama's call to service with passage of sweeping legislation to reauthorize and expand our national service programs, which have not been reauthorized in 16 years. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act renews our commitment to national service and begins a new era of responsibility by improving the ability of the Corporation to manage its programs, easing administrative burdens on grantees, and strengthening accountability.

The Serve America Act recognizes the critical role that national service has played in addressing our society's unmet needs by calling for a substantial increase in new AmeriCorps programs focused on education, clean energy, public health, and veterans, as well as in existing program models that address other national and community needs. The Act sets a goal of increasing the number of AmeriCorps members from 75,000 today to 250,000 in 2017, and increases the Segal Education Award for AmeriCorps participants, linking future increases to the Pell Grant.

The Act strengthens the Learn and Serve America program by supporting efforts to build institutional capacity, creates a new Summer of Service program for middle and high school students, lowers the age of eligibility for senior programs to 55 and introduces competition to the RSVP program to better position it for expansion that will be required to meet the volunteer needs of retiring baby boomers. The Serve America Act also includes initiatives to create a Social Innovation Fund to help take to scale effective initiatives in the nonprofit sector, a National Reserve Corps to be deployed in time of emergency, and a Volunteer Generation Fund to encourage States and nonprofits to increase the number of volunteers to address areas of national or statewide need.

We urge you to seize this historic moment and fund these new and existing national service programs at the \$1.13 billion level requested by President Obama. These programs are a wise federal investment; CNCS estimates that in 2006 the market value of the services that national service participants provided to the nation was between \$1.8 and \$3.8 billion. We believe this investment will pay off many times over, strengthening communities, improving our national well-being, and making service at all levels, by all age groups, a key component of what it means to be an American.

Thank you, in advance, for your support.

Sincerely,



DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress
Co-Chair,
National Service Caucus



TODD PLATTS
Member of Congress
Co-Chair,
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DAVID PRICE
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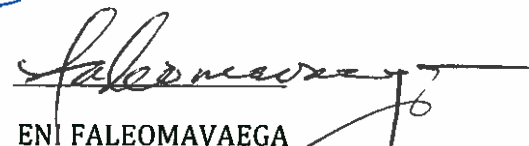
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